



TYPE: Article

Title: Ekphrastic Plastic Fragments: Mark C. Taylor in and Out of Context

Author(s): Camelia Elias

Source: Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory (JCRT)

Published by: Whitestone Publications

Stable URL: <https://jcrt.org/archives/02.2/elias/>

DOI (newest version): [10.17613/twr6q-sr092](https://doi.org/10.17613/twr6q-sr092)

Copyright © held by the author(s). All rights reserved. This text may be used and shared in accordance with the fair-use provisions of U.S. copyright law. Any use of this text in other ways requires the consent of the author and the publisher, the *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory*, and must cite publication in this journal.

<https://jcrt.org/copyright/>



Elias - Ekphrastic Plastic Fragments - JCRT 2.2
 Camelia Elias
 University of Southern Denmark'Odense

—

L'ekphrasis est un fragment anthologique, transferable d'un discours a un autre.

—

' Roland Barthes

—

On the other hand, the treasure of indulgences is most acceptable, for it makes the last to be the first.

—

' Martin Luther

—

What is writing other than drawing two letters and laughing?

—

' Marcel Bénabou

Form is content." It is in the last chapter of his book, *Deconstructing Theology* (1982), that Mark C. Taylor draws the reader's attention to the gnomic form of theological thinking. While *Deconstructing Theology* takes its point of departure in a theoretical consideration of Hegel and Kierkegaard, Taylor ends his thoughts with the constitution of a textual author as a postmodern consciousness that signs itself over to epigrammatic writing. *Deconstructing Theology*, thus, ends pragmatically with a scattering, as it were, of Hegelian and Kierkegaardian elements; the fully-fledged depiction of these philosophers ends in "fully fledged" fragments. These fragments, which make up the last chapter entitled "Tracing," form a collection of 95 quotations and aphorisms, both attributed and non-attributed, suggesting that the formal structure of the book is also its content. The fragments can be read as an enactment of what is being theorized in the first part of the book, thus enforcing the idea that the reconstruction of texts on the basis of fragments is a radicalization of the relation of the text to its contextual fragment. Behind Hegel and Kierkegaard, the invisible influencing power on postmodern theology is Luther's performance of what one could think of as the first deconstruction of theology, namely posting the 95 theses on the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church. Sparking a second reformation (a re-formation, as it were) with "Tracing" is perhaps precisely the condition under which an influence can be re-formed: the meaning of form *qua* form is also the meaning of representation.

3. The aim of this paper is to look at the centrality of Taylor's work as it de-centers itself: the work is a matrix of performances, which discloses the importance of form. As such, however, no centrality can be peered at that would bring Taylor's ideas to the fore in a traditional sense: his work is best read precisely "in and out of context." In other words, Taylor's ideas do not lend themselves to meta-theological inquiries here, but invite the reader to partake in an inquiry of what validates the condition under which a work neither brings into question its ontological status, nor offers an either/or stance. For example, in the context of religious understanding,

I see Taylor's idea of re-formation as a revenge against any such polarity that involves the religious/non-religious stance. Taylor depicts images of the a/theological rather in the same manner that Emile Cioran once used in one of his vivid aphorisms: "For two thousand years, Jesus has revenged himself on us for not having died on the sofa." Alas, no theology can be a constituent for existence from the point of view of the individual.

4. Inasmuch as theology can be deconstructed, theological thinking becomes a kind of a paradoxical constant which settles in the aim for transformation, for performance. But since theology can be subordinated to deconstructive thinking, as it were, it cannot at the same time be a representation of this thinking. Instead it is a representation of this thought's double. It is an excess and an embellishment of the representation process. Taylor is in this sense a baroque writer concerned with the very idea of the theological thought's double, which he chooses to see as a/theology.¹ On this ground a/theology has a dual function of representation and interpretation via the fragment that keeps separate what a/theology represents from the meaning that it offers.
5. The idea that to think in fragments is to think about texts differently propels the question of interpretation to its limits and beyond. The interpretation of the fragment activates the reader's imagination by bringing into play the "opposite" of the fragment, namely a "whole" text. But since the text as a whole is no longer just a whole text, being made up of a plurality of texts, I argue that the emergence of the fragment *qua* whole text depends upon aesthetic experience that is *ekphrastic* in its mode of representation and plastic in its mode of manifestation.

The space of the fragment

6. The investigation of a text that is not written in fragments from the beginning' In *Erring*, Taylor claims that "beginning, which is never original, marks and remarks the constant disappearance of origin" (1984:97)' involves the exclusion or negation of the beginning of the fragment as such by means of including the full text in its own repetition: *Deconstructing Theology* is one such text as its *full* text is in fact made up by previously published essays. De-negation then is at one and the same time repetition and beginning: it is repetition because it generates the question, "of what text?" And likewise, it is beginning because it is self-contained: the fragments have already begun elsewhere, thus representing themselves already as representations, as figures.
7. Taylor's practice of fragmentary writing or incorporating fragments in the body of the otherwise "full" text is a means of inviting readers to partake in a discourse that raises the question about theoretical and philosophical method that is based on an exchange at the level of commentary. Commenting on commented texts in the form of appropriations and insertions of quotations forms a corpus of marginalia, in which the fragment essentially and ultimately belongs to no text in particular but adheres to the status of the whole. As such, the

¹ Although the concept of a/theology is defined in *Deconstructing Theology* only by association and allusion to Derrida's *différance* and Deleuze's "nomad philosophy", a more descriptive elaboration is given in *Erring*: "Since it is forever *entre-deux*, a/theology is undeniably ambiguous. The a/theologian asks errant questions and suggests responses that often seem erratic or even erroneous. Since his reflection wanders, roams and strays from the 'proper' course, it tends to deviate from well-established ways. To traditional eyes, a/theology doubtless appears to be irregular, eccentric, and vagrant. At best it seems aimless, at worst devious. Within this framework, a/theology is, in fact, heretical. For the a/theologian, however, heresy and aimlessness are unavoidable. Ideas are never fixed but are always in transition; thus they are irrepressibly transitory. For this reason, a/theology might be labeled 'Nomad Thought.'" (Taylor, 1984:13) Obviously in *Deconstructing Theology* the interception of transitory ideas itself proves to be fluid. Back

fragment can be considered a *text* in its own right. Taylor here offers a perspective of how the deconstruction of theology can emerge as a postmodern text, which yet displays such baroque strategies as the construction of a self-aware image. Arguing that Hegel and Kierkegaard have shaped the Western postmodern consciousness, Taylor demonstrates that discourse and the philosopher can be considered paradigmatic constructions. For Taylor, the fragment is the metaphor for both the philosopher and his influence. In this sense, the fragment for Taylor is an agent, an enabling category with operative functions able to transcend the divisions between theological thinking, its enactment, or its annulment. Deleuze's notion of the baroque comes to mind: "The Baroque does not refer to an essence, but rather to an operative function, to a characteristic. It endlessly creates folds." (Deleuze, 1991:227)

8. Embellishing one's text with fragments, as it were, annuls any claim to authenticity and sets the work on a tracing course. The depiction of Hegel and Kierkegaard's philosophies via the fragments generates a reading method that unfolds in its own performance. Taylor's texts, in general, are thematizations of their own method, but in a labyrinthine way. The texts are imbued with performance, which assigns Taylor to the category of writers for whom the pursuit of form is both the nature and the function of writing.
9. The key to understanding Taylor's postmodern reflections via theological insights necessitates a discussion of the modality in which the subject of Taylor's fragment becomes the fragment as subject. It can be argued that Taylor's theoretical strength is more or less grounded in elements of the concept of the baroque as the threshold for a conditional appropriation of the fragment as the *nontext*, as the text always (M)arked in its gap, in its ruin. This does not mean that the text preceding the fragments is in waiting for the fragments posited at the end of the book, rather the fragments are a representation of the text, an image of the text, which thus makes the text appear embellished in the baroque sense. On this basis any discussion of theological implications for the postmodern practice of writing inscribes itself within a paradigmatic construction of the threshold as the dominant characteristic of the discourse between the inside and the outside.
10. For Taylor, theological inquiry is writing that is kinetic and kenotic, transgressive and transfiguring, in other words fragmentary. The relationship between theology and deconstruction is exemplified in Taylor's practice of grounding in the fragment both the deconstructed *text* and the verbalised *image* of theology. This baroque strategy reveals some consequences that explore how such traces of theological enunciation find validation in the elaboration of a tripartite philosophy: (1) either Taylor is imposing his a/theology upon the fragments; or (2) the "postmodern a/theology" is derived from the intertwining fragments that he investigates indirectly; or else (3) the fragments are intended to represent what the preceding text already is. And, if it is a/theological, then is it fluid; and if it is fluid, then it is plastic. *Deconstructing Theology* functions as a title and as itself, as it were, as a figure and its representation, as a theology and its double.
11. Interpreting a baroque instance follows a linear and doubling structure in the sense that one has to identify first how the figure is grounded in representation. Figuring a fragment in the middle of a narrative, of a description, forces the fragment to assume a repetitive likeness with the circumscribing text, thus disclosing a specular relation with it. However, since the fragment's text emerges as a counter-figure to the text that surrounds it, encompassing it, the likeness with this text as such may appear diffuse. The fragment itself then is figured as a dark and opaque image of the text. Consequently the reading is suspended, and is replaced

by a sense of spectacularity. If the fragment is a stage in a discourse, then it already exhibits traces of enunciation by its engaging in a dialogic structure with the text it accompanies. The space of the fragment *is* the trace of enunciation, as the fragment, possesses its own name. In other words, the fragment following a *full* text is the eye, which *sees* interpretation as plastic. Taylor writes in *Erring*:

Within the Western theological tradition, the “original” scene of nomination involves God and man. The relation between God and self is thoroughly specular; each mirrors the other. In different terms, man is made in the image of God. This *imago* is an imitation, copy, likeness, representation, similitude, appearance or shadow of divinity. The *imago dei* confers man an identity; this establishes a vocation that can be fulfilled only through the process of imitation. The specularity of the God-self relation forges an inseparable bond between the name of God and the name of man. (Taylor, 1984:35)

12. The fragment is thus an unpredictable statement on the opacity of the text, a variable in the act of tracing a perspective that is also an element that goes into intertextual commentary. As plastic representation replaces interpretation with commentary, the fragment becomes the fulfilment of *imago dei*, yet only as a residue of theological conception.
13. What Taylor intends with his fragment chapter is to establish precisely a dialogue addressing the question of how one expresses philosophical issues that have to do with theological conceptions in an altogether third *language*. If the fragment is this third modality, able to exceed its own literariness in relation to the text, then it will point to a *groundedness* of the notion of what constitutes a philosophical or theological conception. The fragment then provides the text that incorporates it with an image, which means that the fragment subsumed by the text extends to being either a philosophical or a theological, yet unfinished, conception. Furthermore, in defining the relationship between text-grounded and fragment-oriented positions, the fragment proves to be a transformative tool. The fragment’s referent becomes a fold within a fold.
14. *Deconstructing Theology* offers a concrete example of the fold in which the representation of traces of Hegel’s and Kierkegaard’s theories in postmodern literature and philosophy becomes a repetition of interpreting interpretation (also the title of the ante-penultimate chapter). The fold unfolds in “Tracing.” “Tracing” is the repetition of other texts turned into fragments that are made to escape their intertextuality. Having annotated these fragments with consecutive numbers (1-95), Taylor enforces the performative act in which “Tracing” is a counter-theme to its own frame. As such, the chapter operates on two levels: in its entirety or wholeness “Tracing” performs the theory that is extrapolated first in the preceding text; in its fragmentary form, the separate fragments form the counter-theme to the chapter’s own frame.
15. Already in the beginning of the book, Taylor makes an announcement, rather in a *post scriptum* manner, in his tellingly titled introductory notes, “Pretext”: “It is, of course, undeniable that not only this ‘Pretext,’ but this entire volume remains a Pretext’a pre-text to a text yet to be written ‘a postmodern a/theology.” (Taylor, 1982: xx) The pre-text is the post-text and the reader is given free room to engage in his own tracing.
16. Taylor proposes in fragment 89 that “Form *is* content.” In the context of *Deconstructing Theology*, this proposition takes on several meanings and passes through several exchanges between the

fragments and the preceding text. Now, the very first fragment reads thus: “*Trace*: a visible mark or sign of the former presence or passage of some person, a thing or event; vestige, track, trail. To follow the footprints of. To copy by following the lines of the original drawing on a transparent sheet placed upon it. To plait, twine, interweave.” (107, fragment 1) This definition discloses two levels. Internally, it points to what exactly goes on in the last chapter as such; the definition thus works as an aesthetic agenda—one can only gauge the chapter’s form. Externally, the definition works methodically as a strategy for how to read the last chapter in its entirety; as such, it is ultimately an analytic agenda for the pre-text.

17. The text of the pretext works as a duplicitous fold in the Deleuzian sense, as it marks a moment of de-negation. Says Deleuze: “the ‘duplicity’ of the fold is necessarily reproduced on both of the sides which it distinguishes and which it sets into a mutual relation by distinguishing them: a scission in which each term sets off the other, a tension in which each fold is extended into the other.” (Deleuze, 1991:236) In other words, the pretext is apology turned on its head. It is a paratext to the book and a re-presentation of writing. The pretext is duplicitous as it presents itself as “re-presentation,” therefore pre-textual, while making the object of this re-presentation its own negation. Taylor, echoing Edmond Jabès, puts into question the question of the book, which he says is the question of theology. But this statement is confined within the frame of the pretext, which he claims epitomizes the work of a book that is yet to come, in other words, a book that does not exist. The function of the fragment then is to lay the ground, “ground grounds figure” (fragment 25), that would have to apply to itself in order to constitute simultaneously the premise and the argument for the corroborative evidence of the performance. Taylor is performing his name, he introduces himself as the event itself, that of tracing a mark/Mark. Mark copies the lines that we, the readers, are reading/Marking. The pretext thus framed becomes interpretable *post facto* as an iconic story despite its proleptic position in the text as a repetition, a doubling image, of the mark, (M)ark.
18. In baroque *pictorial* parlance Taylor’s paradox can be explained by making a reference to the art historian’s discourse on the eye, which is invariably defined as “hidden,” “surprised,” “inquiring” “methodical,” etc. (Marin, Stoichita). For example, when the image of the hidden eye perceives the dimension of depth as breadth, the iconic story unfolds in the ellipsis. “Following in the footprints of” not only functions as the iconic story which the reader tells himself while contemplating/following the immobile representation in the optical eye, but also functions as the reader’s representative within the representation, which the theoretical eye sees in the ellipsis. What leaves a trace is not the story but the eye. In the eye the mark cannot be expected to change the view.

Pretextual Correlations

19. The very first fragments correlate very neatly, especially to the text of the pretext. Via definitions of the trace, which governs all the relations in the book, the pretext asserts itself as a moment of an *ekphrastic*² representation: “our task is to undo the theology of presence

²Numerous definitions of *ekphrasis* are given by Peter Wagner in the introduction to *Icons-Texts-Iconotexts-Essays on Ekphrasis and Intermediality*, where among other things he mentions the mimetic aspect of *ekphrasis* that has a “Janus face,” able to stage paradoxes regarding the overcoming of supremacy of the image in the text (1996:13) Taylor also discusses an opposition that has the same “face”: “In addition to the tension between surface and depth, figural interpretation also includes the tensive relation of past, present, and the future. Every figure is Janus-faced.” (Taylor, 1984:59)

and the philosophy of absence with a hermeneutics of word." (Taylor, 1982:108, fragment 5) In the question of the book as a question of theology what is probed is writing vs. essence. The task of undoing theology as such unfolds itself as the reader's representative within the representation of an imperative, which is the hermeneutic imperative become aesthetic in the word. The fold comes after the fold.

20. Another example of the pre-text unfolding in the text via the fragments is given in its correlation to the chapter entitled "The Empty Mirror." The structure of Taylor's setting for the chapters "Pretext" and "The Empty Mirror" double the theme of absence in deconstruction. The result is a circumscription of this very structure that further allows for a second-order setting where theology is being both *set up* and *framed*. The pretext for the non-existence of the book, as it were, necessarily unfolds in an empty space. The pretext of the fragment as the *first* trace is realized in an inverse image of the fragment's still a trace, and which as such does not exist where self-realization of the fragment is only possible via de-negation in an empty mirror. What is de-negated is the acceptance of the text of the pretext which in effect prefigures the *futurity* of the book, for which the empty mirror functions as the representation of the operation that constitutes it *pro futurum*.
21. In "The Empty Mirror" Taylor traces, "first hand," Foucault's reading of Velázquez's famous painting, *Las Meninas* (1656) the Velázquez painting being rightly famous for its inclusion of a neutralized focal point, though blind, which depicts any one reader of the painting in the painting. The argument is that the disappearance of authority and the disappearance of selfhood involves the negative dialectics apprehended "second hand" in the tracing of Hegel's dialectical idea of the opposites that are implicitly identical (93). Inasmuch as the task of undoing theology is dependant on the constitution of a (pre)textual theology, the negative dialectics can be comprehended as the invisible drive behind the deconstruction that represents a visible image of "postmodernism raised to method" (xx). Method then reflects a fragment of the *image* of theology under construction, as it were, yet experienced as duplicitous. A/theology is thus caught between the practical evidence that deconstructive writing puts forth and the sublimated image of the theological fragment re-formed. A/theology is framed, *ekphrastic* representation.
22. One such example is given in the fragment that reads: "*Experimentum Crucis*" (125, fragment 88). This particular fragment comes with a drawing of a figure walking on a half-broken bridge. Here, there are several ways of seeing how the *ekphrastic* representation stands for the representation of the fragment as a drawing that realizes itself via the text that accompanies it. Murray Krieger sees *ekphrasis* as a classic genre, as "the imitation in literature of a work of plastic art." (Krieger, 1992:265) The imitation of the object as "spatial work" is thus seen as "the metaphor for the temporal work which seeks to capture it in that temporality" (265). On these terms *ekphrasis* represents the symbolization of the spatiality and plasticity of literature's temporality: the silent images are given voice, while there is an attempt to escape the image and its grip by inscribing it in precisely the verbal discourse that puts the image into *picture*. As Krieger has it, via *ekphrasis* a plastic object is seen as a "symbol of the frozen, stilled world of plastic relationships which must be superimposed upon literature's turning world to 'still' it" (266)
23. Placing itself at odds with Krieger's definition, the phrase "*Experimentum crucis*" realizes itself as *ekphrastic* representation through the image of the cross, while the visual representation of the figure walking on the broken bridge is unable, quite literally, to continue, thus marking

a suspension in the reflection on the missing part: the gaze in the eye glides towards the text. And the text of "*Experimentum Crucis*" does not represent a static world but a metaphor in transference. The metaphoric suspension symbolized by the cross is represented in the literalization of experience whose graphicity is given in pondering over the significance of being suspended over the cross as an experience of the ultimate inadequacy inherent in all representations of precisely *the* cross. But the pondering is mediated, as the figure walking on the broken bridge is holding a lunette; the experience of the break is thus mediated by optics; what is perceived is not the break but the representation of the break.

24. James Heffernan has surpassed Krieger's *ekphrasis* by seeing it as the explicit representation of representation itself, thus distinguishing it from pictorialism and iconicity. His analysis of Keats's *Ode on a Grecian Urn* asserts that *ekphrasis* "represents the arrested moment of graphic art not by re-creating its fixity in words but rather by releasing its embryonically narrative impulse." (Heffernan, 1991:300-7) This means that in the presence of an image already incorporated by a text, one experiences simultaneously the synchronicity and diachronicity of participating in the space of the image. As the lunette also looks like a trumpet, suggesting the announcement of the break, the *ekphrastic* representation takes on its duplicitous fold in its heralding of another instance of experience in which what is mediated is the rationality of the image (following Novalis who has it that experience is the test of the rational).
25. And here we come to an interesting metaleptic reversal: the same drawing is also figured in Taylor's other book *Altarity* (1987), where he discusses Kierkegaard's marginalia. The drawing belongs to Kierkegaard, only in the original manuscript the bridge is not broken. This drawing too comes with a comment, but there is no graphic intervention from Taylor, no insertion of gaps: "A solitary individual, precariously balanced on a tightrope attached to neither supporting column, who is either looking for help through a spyglass or calling for assistance through a megaphone." (Taylor, 1987:312) One could say that the inclusion of the gap in the first drawing and the exclusion of intervention in the second make up for the difference between a bridge and a tightrope. The exclusion of a portion of the bridge, fragmenting it in the drawing in *Deconstructing Theology*, correlates to leaving a trace as a mark in the gap; the mark is both visible by implication and invisible by consequence. Ever prefiguring the ground Taylor declares in *Notes*: "The space of the bridge is a nonspace; its site a nonsite. The bridge is suspended along a border, margin, boundary, in an interval, gap, cleavage. The place of the bridge is the nonplace of the between where here and now are suspended. This between which is forever oscillating, brings together what it holds apart and what it brings together." (Taylor, 1993:98) Taylor's tracing of Kierkegaard's tracing becomes a moment of an *ekphrastic ekphrasis*. Looking at the drawing is a leap of interpretive participation; the suspension mediates the question: What is this drawing about?
26. As a title for the drawing, "*Experimentum Crucis*" may also indicate another instance, namely the philosopher's dilemma in the search for the proof of God's existence, the beginning of interpretation. According to Heffernan, picture titles are *ekphrastic* when they display a narrative which connects the moments depicted with the moments to come for the figures in the picture or for the artist him- or herself. He writes: "a picture title is a verbal representation of the picture. It answers precisely the kinds of questions answered by sepulchral inscriptions 'Who is it? What is it?' and it begins the work of interpreting the picture for us. At the same time it may also begin the work of converting the picture into a narrative" (Heffernan, 1991:303). In our case, the making of a narrative on the basis of the reading of both the title and the drawing takes shape in the question of how that which mediates the proof of God's existence can be

illustrated. A *kataleptic* (here as opposed to *metaleptic*) reading of the figure may point to an identification: the figure is none other than Indiana Jones who, finding the scrapbook with directions for overcoming the obstacles in the search for the Holy Grail, has to rely on the idea that the proof itself of the grail's existence is mediated only by faith. One of the indications in the scrapbook has it that the only way of crossing over the gap in the bridge is by making a leap of faith. Thus, the experiment of "*Experimentum Crucis*" in the title corroborates the experiment that the walking figure is attempting, which means that it is mediated by the experience itself. The intertextual reference in the title is implicit in the drawing.

27. As in the Velázquez painting, in which it is possible for the reader to get a glimpse of himself in the empty mirror, so is it possible for the reader of Taylor's drawing to see what functions as representative within the representation, namely the blank space, "*l'espace blanc*." Says Heffernan: "what *ekphrasis* represents in words, therefore must itself be *representational*" (300) thus directing the reader to the point where the drawing unfolds itself in the fold upon fold. "*Experimentum Crucis*" moves in the direction of experience as the last fragment reads: " 'Few are experienced enough in the difference between an object of scholarship and a matter of thought.' " (Taylor, 1982:126, fragment 95)
28. Indeed, tracing oneself in the tracing of Taylor's tracing of Foucault's tracing of Velázquez's tracing of himself in his own portrait can be called the fragment as the fold'which becomes at once the locus and the time, in which the basic function of the blank, the empty mirror, allows the text of the pretext, in tandem with its accompanying fragments, to constitute and efface itself, in the book yet to be written, in the empty space.
29. Thus, it is not at random that Taylor places a fragment'which governs the principle according to which he composed the book'in the space immediately after *Experimentum Crucis*: "Aphoristic language is gappy'full of holes. *L'espace blanc*. Silence and speech 'acting together.' Form is content." (125, fragment 89) Moreover, this first instance, when Taylor allows the fragments to write the "Pretext" and "The Empty Mirror," can be seen as the representation of the *ekphrastic plastic fragment*, where plasticity is figured in the replacement of fragmentary rhetoric by its performance. Again, the "Pretext" which emphasizes post-textuality'the pretext having negated its own existence'is representation whose object does not get de-negated further than the chapter that mirrors it. Between the pretext and the mirror is the influence and the journey of the fragment.
30. Fragmentary writing, writing in fragments, which is exterior to writing in full, which is almost always supported by images, marginalia, folds, syllogisms, portraits, is not "always secondary," as Taylor so enlightens us in *Altarity* (1987). Rather, it is almost primary in its grounding of a full text in a paratext. The supplementary and complementary principle, which is the fragment's frame, indeed baroquifies any full text that a fragment might accompany. *Deconstructing Theology* is an ornate book in this sense, as it posits Hegel and Kierkegaard neither inside, nor outside, but on the threshold of postmodern discourse, on the threshold of Derrida's trace, and Taylor's mark.
31. The foremost function of the *ekphrastic plastic fragment* that I have called the fold'and elsewhere, the syllogism, and the portrait'is to suggest that theological inquiry also proceeds from a direction governed by the fragment. As the fragment interprets and orients the full text it accompanies, it also anticipates a *metaleptic reversal* that shows the mastery of the fragment in its dealings with questions of position: up or down, inside or outside. The fragment is the fold because it is always "up" on intertextual divergency. *Deconstructing Theology*, as a

baroque text, orients the reader to the re-thinking of the question of repetition. Repeating the text of another text, figuring it as a fragment, the book posits repetition as synthesis. "Tracing" is perhaps the condition under which a postmodern text is also a baroque text, as the meaning of form *qua* form is also the meaning of representation. Thus, Taylor's depicting of portraits in the image of others is almost indubitably a moment not of *imitatio dei*, but of self-imitation that exceeds what theology can grasp. The fragment in this sense is a paradigmatic application of a/theology to the syntagmatic self-aware image of theology.

Notes

Works Cited

- Altizer, Thomas J.J. (1982) "Foreword." In Taylor, Mark C., *Deconstructing Theology*. New York: The Crossroads Publishing Company & Scholars Press.
- Deleuze, Gilles (1991) "The Fold." In *Baroque Topographies: Literature/History/Philosophy*. Yale French Studies, No. 80. Cambridge: Yale University Press.
- Heffernan, James A.W. (1991) "Ekphrasis and Representation." In *New Literary History: A Journal of Theory & Interpretation*, vol. 22, no. 2
- Heffernan, James A.W. (1993) *Museum of Words/The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Krieger, Murray (1992) *Ekphrasis, the Illusion of the Natural Sign*. Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Marin, Louis (1984) *Utopics: The Semiological Play of Textual Spaces*, Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International.
- Marin, Louis (1995) *To Destroy Painting*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Stoichita, Victor I. (1997) *The Self-Aware Image, An Insight into Early Modern Meta-Painting*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Taylor, Mark C. (1982) *Deconstructing Theology*. New York: The Crossroads Publishing Company and Scholars Press.
- Taylor, Mark C. (1984) *Erring: A Postmodern A/theology*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press,
- Taylor, Mark C. (1987) *Altarity*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Taylor, Mark C. (1993) *Nots*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Wagner, Peter (ed.) (1996) *Icons'Texts'Iconotexts: Essays on Ekphrasis and Intermediality*. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Camelia Elias was born in Romania (1968) and received her primary and secondary education there. Since coming to Denmark she has taken an MA in English from Aalborg University, specializing in literary hermeneutics. She is currently a Ph.D. candidate at the Institute of Literature, Culture and Media Studies, SDU, Odense. Her project, with the working title "Theorists in Wonderland - Performing Progressive Deconstruction", deals with the history and deconstructive poetics of the fragment as a performative genre. The work focuses on fragmentary writing in literary theory, exemplified by writers such as Mark C. Taylor, Avital Ronell and Ursula Krammer Maynard. Camelia's teaching interests include literary theory, cross-aesthetics, and the borderlands between literature,

art history and theology. Her work on the epigraph as performative has appeared in
“The Practice of Theory” - Theory@Buffalo. (1999)

Copyright © held by the author(s). 2001 Camelia Elias. All rights reserved.
Updated 07/28/21.
jcrt.org/archives/02.2/elias
